

**Lake Michigan Fisheries Team
November 19-20, 2002
Plymouth Service Center
Draft Notes**

These notes summarize LMFT decisions and recommendations, but are not intended as a summary of all discussions.

Next meeting: January 22, 2003 at the Plymouth Service Center.

Present for all or part of the meeting: Bill Horns, John Kubisiak, Pradeep Hirethota, Terry Lychwick, Mike Toneys, Brad Eggold, Matt Coffaro, Paul Peeters, Justine Hasz, Steve Hogler, Dick Rebicek, Sue Marcquenski, Al Kaas, Randy Link, Mark Opgenorth, Steve Hewett, Bob Fahey, Fred Binkowski, Steve Fajfer, Tom Hansen, George Boronow

Green Bay white perch PCBs

Background. A total of 145 white perch collected from Green Bay in 2001 and 2002 have now been analyzed for PCB levels. The average PCB level in skin-on fillets was 0.77 ppm, with three fish exceeding 2 ppm. These results were presented in summary form to the Lake Michigan Fisheries Forum on Nov. 11. Commercial fishers now expect the Department to consider facilitating increased harvest of white perch. Tests of the lampara seine were conducted without prior notification of Justine Hasz. The tests failed to show that this gear type offers promise as either an assessment tool or as a commercial gear for the harvest of white perch, but were thought by commercial fishers to be inconclusive because the net used was not designed for the conditions and species found in Green Bay.

Action. 1) A committee made up of Tom Hansen, Justine Hasz, Terry Lychwick, and Mike Kitt will meet to review management options to facilitate the commercial harvest of white perch. The committee will consider rule changes, amendments to the existing rough fish removal contracts, and other options. The committee will report recommendations to the LMFT before April, 2003. 2) Bill Horns agreed to compose a letter to the appropriate individuals clarifying the law regarding the experimental use of fishing gear and stressing the importance of prior notification of Justine before future trials. 3) Lee Meyers will locate a copy of the FWS scientific collectors permit for reference.

Lake Michigan Integrated Fisheries Management Plan

Background. All LMFT members have received copies of comments received from various quarters regarding the draft LMIFMP. The LMFF reviewed those comments, and commented on the comments (see latest LMFF notes). Our timetable calls for us to complete a final draft of the new plan and have it approved by our Guidance Team by the end of January.

Action. The LMFT reviewed all comments that had been received, including those from the Forum that resulted from its Nov. 11 meeting. Bill Horns agreed to prepare a final draft for review by the LMFT via e-mail.

2002 fall runs

Background. In 2002 chinook runs were exceptional at all weirs, but coho and steelhead runs were disappointing.

Action. Discussed.

Weir management issues

Background. Mike Toney had raised a number of concerns and questions regarding current and future weir operations. Some of these questions have important implications for work planning. Mike Staggs had stated, “As part of your [i.e., LMFT] budget reduction item [see below], one of the options that must be critically analyzed is temporarily suspending egg collection operations at one of the weirs.”

Action A broad-ranging discussion of weir management issues is summarized below in a list of “Questions, Concerns, and Comments” and a list of “Suggestions”. No attempt was made to reach consensus regarding the suggestions that were made, so no assumptions should be made regarding LMFT support for any specific item. The lists are included here for future reference and discussion.

Questions, Concerns, and Comments.

- Has the health (i.e., prevalence of BKD) improved among chinook returning to BAFF? (Yes)
- What steps could be taken to improve the returns of Skamania to BAFF?
- Strawberry Creek has been stocked exclusively with “Lake Michigan (Strawberry Creek) strain” chinooks and has maintained low disease prevalence.
- If Strawberry Creek runs are ever inadequate, can chinooks returning to the other weirs be used to meet production goals, without compromising genetic or fish health standards? (Yes)
- Are there additional safety concerns at the weirs that we should deal with? Forklift at Strawberry Creek?
- Are we following the existing protocol for managing anadromous feral brood stocks? (No)
- Do we want to maintain 3 strains of steelhead?
- Weirs are expensive.
- Are we trying to do too much research at the weirs?
- We need to keep using weirs for research.
- Do we need to maintain all three weirs?
- For chinook, the need for a backup spawning weir is reduced since the pipe has been installed at Strawberry Creek.
- We seem to spend more time processing fish than in the past.
- Handling fish for non-propagation purposes (i.e., food pantry, bait, fertilizer) takes time.
- BAFF is underutilized as a source of chinook eggs.
- Recover of heads from coded-wire tag studies have recently taken up a lot of time, but that will now decline.
- Abundant chinook in the Root River hamper the collection of steelhead and cohos.
- The Root is not needed for chinook, except under unusual circumstances.
- Spend more money on hatcheries, less on studies.
- Where does revenue from sale of eggs go? Can it be retained for use by the LM program?
- Do we want to adopt the Michigan model of using private contractors to propagate and process returning spawners.
- Can we cut chinook stocking in the brood rivers?

- We should pass fewer fish up the Root River.
- We have but do not follow the *Fish Passage Protocol* for BAFF.
- There are good reasons for not following the *Fish Passage Protocol*
- Before we re-allocate stocked chinook away from the Root and/or Kewaunee Rivers, we should fully consider public concerns on the issue.
- Do we need two chinook spawning weirs in NER?
- Chinook handling is more efficient at Strawberry Creek than at BAFF.
- Oversight of the pump at Strawberry Creek is demanding.
- Support personnel are conveniently available at Strawberry Creek.
- Should size-at-stocking targets be reviewed?
- Does the practice of stocking large post-smolt cohos contribute to poor returns to the weirs?
- Could we gain efficiency in salmon and trout propagation through cooperative arrangements with the other states?

Suggestions:

- Reduce chinook stocking in the Root and Kewaunee Rivers.
- Use more fin clips, less coded-wire tags.
- Propagate chinook salmon at BAFF instead of at Strawberry Creek.
- Review and revise the BAFF *Fish Passage Protocol*; create one for RRSF.
- Pass fewer chinooks at RRSF.
- Review and consider revising the anadromous feral broodstock management protocol.
- 1) Cut coho stocking in NER to 20,000 yearlings in each of four counties (Marinette, Door, Kewaunee, Manitowoc) and shift the rest to SER, where all coho propagation would take place.
2) Close Strawberry Creek and use BAFF to propagate chinooks.
- Return to fin clipping no steelhead other than those stocked in brood rivers.

Allocating Salmon Stamp funding cuts – stocking vs projects

Background. Salmon Stamp funding for field projects and for fish production will be reduced this year by an estimated \$167,000. Unless savings can be found on the production side, this will mean significant cuts in our Salmon Stamp funded field projects (creel surveys, weir data collection, lake trout work, etc.). Al Kaas has worked with hatchery managers to find ways to cut costs, and has identified almost \$32,000 in potential savings. Prior to the meeting, the LMFT identified possible stocking cuts that could be considered to save money for field projects and Al estimated savings that would be realized if any of those cuts were made.

Action. The LMFT concluded that some stocking cuts were tolerable and should be balanced with cuts in field projects. Bill Horns will summarize LMFT thinking in a memo to Mike Staggs.

Work planning

Background. Project writing for the 2003-2005 biennium will begin soon. Great Lakes project funding comes through two categories. Funding allocations are uncertain, and further cuts should be expected, but the LMFT is provisionally using the following possible allocations for work planning purposes:

Special Projects – Great Lakes Fisheries Assessments -- \$102,552 of SEG funds and \$242,084 of Salmon Stamp funds.

Special Projects – Commercial Fisheries Assessments -- \$33,512 of SEG funds.

Action. Projects funded in the current biennium were reviewed. The following tables reflect possible cuts in some but not all projects. They can serve as the basis for preliminary work planning, but further discussions will be needed. This summary does not imply that the LMFT recommends these funding levels at this time or that the team recommends all listed projects for funding. Nor does it imply that other projects cannot be considered for funding in these categories.

Great Lakes Fisheries Assessments	leader/author in 2002-2003	activity code	seg \$	SS \$
feral salmonid broodstock mgmt	Fassbender	FHCC	0	2500
assess brown trout strains	Hasz	FHCB	0	1700
coho/chinook broodstock mgmt	Toneys	FHHZ	0	8000
nearshore rainbow	Fassbender	FHNL	0	1000
assess yellow perch fishery	Hasz	FHCG	22300	0
assess walleye fishery	Lychwick	FHCH	3800	0
lake trout restoration/mgmt	Toneys	FHCA	0	10000
N. Pike habitat improvement	Rost ¹	FHDN	1555	0
Great Lakes aquatic education	Opgenorth	FHPW	0	12500
coho/chinook broodstock mgmt	Toneys	FHHZ	0	1000
lake trout restoration/mgmt	Schram ¹	FHCA	0	39090
assess Chequamegon Bay fishery	Schram ¹	FHDM	3550	0
assess Duluth harbor fishery	Pratt ¹	FHJY	5860	0
coaster brook trout plan	Pratt ¹	FHIB	0	13205
Lake Superior creel survey	Schram ¹	FHFE	0	35160
maintenance of lamprey barriers	Pratt ¹	FHCI	0	18620
Gurnoe decision activities	Schram ¹	FHDL	2020	0
analysis of Lake Michigan data	Eggold ²	FHIC	0	16150
salmon and trout stocking evaluation	Eggold	FHSE	0	20000
assess yellow perch fishery	Eggold	FHCG	14550	0
predation on stocked salmon	Eggold	FHJX	9867	0
Lake Michigan sport fishing surveys	Eggold ²	FHCR	0	106000
southern Green Bay creel survey	Lychwick	FHDO	31750	0
spotted muskellunge restoration	Hasz	FHPX	1000	0
TOTALS			96252	284925

Commercial Fisheries Assessments	leader/author in 2002-2003	activity code	seg \$	SS \$
commercial catch statistics	Toneys	FHBJ	0	0
determine commercial quotas (CFB\$)	Toneys	FHCV	0	0
determine commercial quotas	Toneys	FHCV	5460	0
yellow perch catch monitoring	Hawley	FHBK	8994	0
whitefish catch monitoring	Schram ¹	FHBM	4400	0
assess yellow perch recruitment	Eggold	FHHL	8183	0
commercial catch stats. – Miss R.	Brecka ¹	FHFN	2900	0
TOTALS			29937	0

¹ For projects where the project leader was not present and for Lake Superior and Mississippi River projects, no adjustments were made in proposed funding.

² We discussed ways to cut creel surveys to save money, with no resolution. Values shown here reflect project funding in 2002-2003. Significant cuts will be needed.

Large boat management and staffing

Background. Bill Horns, Steve Schram, Mike Toney, and Brad Eggold developed recommendations regarding large boats (i.e., the Hack, the Barney, and the Perca) for Mike Staggs. The recommendations called for sustaining or filling one boat captain position for each boat. Pursuant to those recommendations one boat captain position will be filled on Lake Michigan, to be located either at Sturgeon Bay or Milwaukee.

Action. Steve Hewett attended the meeting to discuss this item. He asked Bill Horns to lead an effort to develop a PD for the position, to draft an achievement history questionnaire, and to recommend an interview panel.

Lakewide Plan for Lake Trout Restoration in Lake Michigan

Background. The Lake Michigan Committee is struggling with developing a charge to the Lake Trout Task Group to allow them to begin drafting a revised Plan.

Action. Discussed.

November 11 meeting of LMFF

Background. The Forum met on November 11.

Action. Discussed.

LMFF membership issues

Background. At our last meeting we agreed to recommend renewing the appointments of three members who were initially appointed for two years – Bill Willis, Lee Haasch, and Larry Wirth. Bill Willis and Lee Haasch agreed to continue. Willis and Haasch agreed to continue serving on the Forum. Larry Wirth will not continue.

Action. The LMFT agreed to replace Larry Wirth with a stream fishermen, and authorized Bill Horns to discuss participation with four specified candidates and recommend one from among those four.

Implementation of recommendations of Commercial Fishing Task Force

Background. Drafting is moving forward. A meeting of the CFTF is being scheduled for the second week of December.

Action. Discussed.

Lake Michigan Committee, Council of Lake Committees, and Lake Michigan Technical Committee meetings

Background. The LMC and CLC met this fall and discussed a number of issues. The Lake Michigan Technical Committee will meet January 14-15, 2003.

Action. Discussed

Great Lakes Fishery Commission research funding timelines

Background. The pre-proposal deadline for both the Fishery Research Program of the GLFC and the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act is December 17, 2002.

Action. Discussed.

Great Lakes Study Committee meeting – December 13.

Background. The Great Lakes Study Committee will meet on the evening of December 13, and will discuss resolutions from 2002 and questionnaire items for 2003. Three resolutions arising from last Spring's hearings have been referred to the GLSC. They call for 1) assessing the impact of trawling on benthos, 2) allowing trolling for salmon in the deep waters of the lower Manitowoc River and 3) creating a catch and release bass season from March 1st to the first Saturday in May on Lake Michigan, Green Bay. and tributaries. At least two items of interest to the LMFT and the GLSC will be in the questionnaire at the 2003 Spring Hearings. One is an advisory question pertaining to smallmouth bass and northern pike management in Green Bay. The other is a rule change that Tom Hansen drafted pertaining to preventing the transfer of exotic species to inland waters.

Action. The LMFT discussed the issues. Mike Toney's agreed to represent the program on December 13.

Formation of a Green Bay yellow perch research group

Background. Justine Hasz has drafted a charge to guide formation of and action by the proposed Green Bay Yellow Perch Research Group.

Action. Justine will circulate a Green Bay Fisheries Research Group charge for approval by the LMFT.

Projects for funding under the Restoration Plan for the Lower Fox and Green Bay NRDA

Background. The Restoration Plan has been adopted and projects will now be considered for funding (see <http://midwest.fws.gov/nepa>)

Action. Discussed.

Yellow Perch Task Group meeting

Background. The Lake Michigan Yellow Perch Task Group will meet in early December. We have the opportunity to review and discuss assessment data from this summer prior to that meeting.

Action. Discussed.

Sturgeon

Background. We have two sturgeon-related topics, which can be taken up together. 1) Several LMFT members will attend the Great Lakes Sturgeon Coordination Meeting, December 11-12 in Sault Ste. Marie. 2) Ron Bruch and Fred Binkowski have called for the creation of a Lake Michigan Lake Sturgeon Task Group.

Action. Discussed.

Notifying LE about stocking locations and times

Background. Tom Hansen has raised a concern about timely communication with LE regarding the times and locations of stocking events.

Action. Not discussed.

Short-course on statistical catch-at-age modeling

Background. Bill Horns, Paul Peeters, Brad Eggold, Steve Schram, and Justine Hasz will attend one or both short-course/workshops on statistical catch-at-age modeling to be held at Michigan

State University in December and January.

Action. Not discussed.

Lake Michigan decision modeling workshop

Background. Mike Jones has scheduled a workshop to go over his decision analysis modeling regarding stocking in Lake Michigan. I plan to attend. This is or can be a significant exercise to guide future lakewide stocking policy.

Action. Not discussed.

Timetable for promulgation of whitefish/smelt rule

Background. The whitefish trap net rule, allowing summer trap netting in most of Zone 3, will go the NRB in December for approval of public hearings, which would be held in January. The LMFF recommendation regarding smelt trawling may be advanced as a rule proposal at the same time.

Action. Not discussed.

Ruffe in Lake Michigan

Background. Ruffe have been caught in Lake Michigan, near Escanaba.

Action. Not discussed.

Type E Botulism

Background. Type E Botulism is present in Sturgeon Bay, according Chris Kratcha. Type E Botulism is an issue of concern in Lake Erie.

Action. Not discussed.

Early mortality syndrome workshop

Background. We have received the notes from the workshop on early mortality syndrome (EMS).

Action. Not discussed.